

“Whew! I am glad to be done with work today.” Bunz said to himself as he left his office on a Friday afternoon. Rain poured down from the sky, making even a late spring day



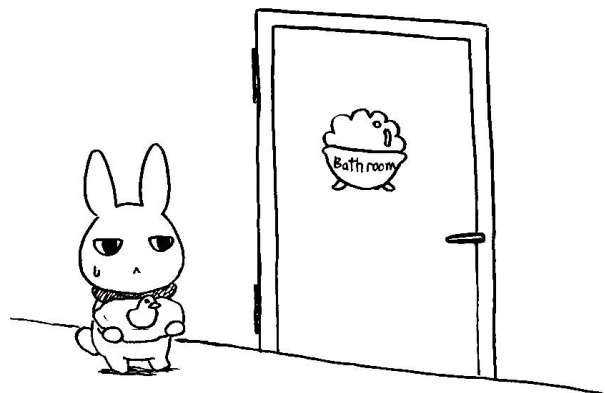
feel uncomfortably cool. To make matters worse, he had forgotten his umbrella. Soaking wet, He climbed into his car and turned on the radio for his drive home. A few minutes in, the radio blared about breaking news:

“A white tiger cub has gone missing from the zoo. Zookeepers are not sure how the tiger disappeared, but they have contacted police as they believe the cub may have been taken by force. Anyone with information should call...”

Bunz turned the radio down.

“Well, I hope that little guy gets back to the zoo. And I really hope I don’t run into it. Even a little tiger would be big trouble for me. I just wanna get home and take a nice, warm bath.”

So when Bunz arrived home a few minutes later, he was distressed to hear the sound of his roommate, Raincoat, using the bathroom.



“That idiot always wears a raincoat, so there’s no way he got wet. Why is he taking a bath now?”

Perturbed, Bunz decided to make a hot cup of carrot tea while he waited for the bathroom to open up. While he sipped and tried to warm up, he heard almost constant giggling and splashing sounds coming from the bathroom.

“What is he doing in there? He better not be making a big mess...” Bunz grumbled.



All in all, being goofy and making a mess was pretty typical for Raincoat, so Bunz wasn’t particularly concerned. He did, however, want Raincoat to hurry up.

After a few more minutes of listening to laughing and splashing Bunz finished his tea and heard the sound of a hair dryer.

“Finally, he’s almost done.”

But something strange happened. Raincoat continued to giggle throughout the whole time he used the hair dryer.

Then right after the dryer switched off:

“You are such a marshmallow! So fluffy and *poofy!*”

Raincoat cooed from the bathroom.

Bunz couldn’t take it any more.

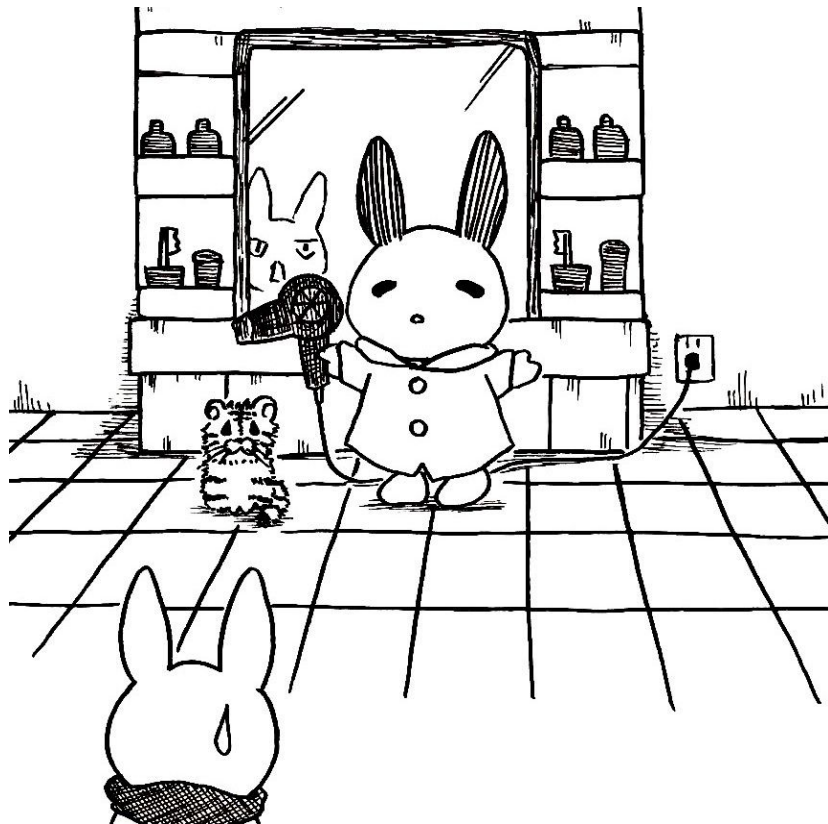
“Ok, even for him, this is too weird. Something’s going on.”
He hopped over to the bathroom and knocked on the door.
“Yes?” Raincoat replied.

“What are you doing in there? Are you talking to someone?”
“Hehe, come in and you can see our new friend.”

Bunz did not like the sound of that, but he had to figure out
was going on. Slowly, he opened the door.

“Aaaaaaahh! What is that and what is it doing here?”

What he saw was a freshly bathed and dried creature whose
white fur was now fluffed out making it indeed resemble a
marshmallow.



“Wahaaa! Bunzy, don’t be so mean. He’s a little kitty I found on my way home from school. It was alone in the rain, so I had to take him home.”

“O boi...”

Bunz, of course, noticed the stripes on the small feline right away and suspected that it might be the zoo’s missing tiger cub, but the typically oblivious Raincoat was certain that he had picked up a normal kitten.



“I think you’re name is gonna be...Poofy! Because you’re so poofy like a marshmallow!”

“Don’t name it! It’s a tiger cub from the zoo. We have to get it back.”

“Poofy isn’t a tiger, and he’s not from the zoo. He’s just a normal kitty that I found on the street.”

“He *is* a tiger, and either way, you cannot keep a dangerous carnivore in my house. That thing is gonna eat us!”

“Bunzy, you think everything is gonna eat us. But we’re still here, so I think you worry too much.”

“And you’re dumb too much. Look at this.”

Bunz went over and turned on the TV. Raincoat followed him slowly with the apparent tiger up alongside. The local news had a story about the zoo’s missing tiger cub. A picture of the cub flashed on screen.

“Hey, that looks like Poofy!” Raincoat immediately reacted.

The TV report continued, “*Anyone with information regarding the missing cub is encouraged to contact the zoo or the police immediately...*”

Bunz replied, “See, he is a tiger, and he can’t stay. We have to call them now.”

“*Police say the perpetrator will be punished severely for keeping the tiger from the zoo...*”

“What’s a perpendicular, Bunzy?”

“They said perpetrator! It means criminal. If the police catch us, we go to jail.”



“Wahaaaaaaa!” Raincoat whined. “If we call them, Poofy has to go back to the zoo and we go to jail. We’ll all end up behind bars.”

Bunz stood silently, but he realized that Raincoat had a point.

“O boi. I guess that means we’ll just have to return Poof-- I mean, the tiger, *secretly*.”

Bunz and Raincoat spent the rest of the evening working with Poofy, as Raincoat insisted the tiger be called. Tiger or not, he was obviously a baby and needed to be fed milk, so Bunz warmed some up while Raincoat bounce off to the store to get a bottle. Bunz wasn’t sure that Raincoat would get the right bottle, but it was better than letting him try to use the stove. Plus, it also gave Bunz a bit of time alone to

think of a plan to get the newborn tiger back to the zoo without being found.

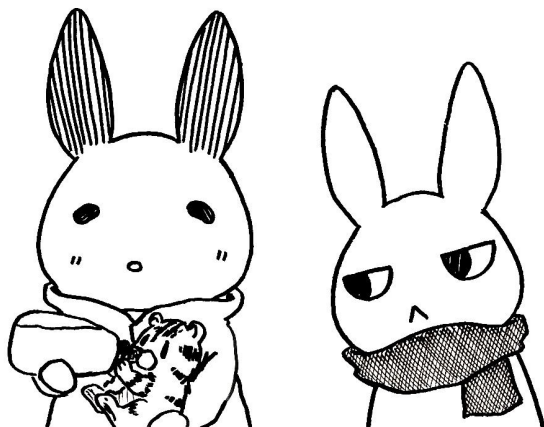
“The weekend is gonna be busy, so we can’t do it during the day,” Bunz brainstormed to himself. “Maybe the best bet will be late Sunday night after everyone goes home. Hopefully by then, the news coverage will have died down a bit too.”

Bunz looked over at the cub. It stared back at him and cocked its head sideways before trotting towards him. As it approached, Bunz hesitantly reached out to pet it...

“Owwww!” Bunz recoiled from the tiger as its small, needle-like teeth sunk into his paw. The bite was more surprising than painful, but Bunz was nonetheless annoyed by the cub’s smug look.

“Heh, typical carnivore. You better make sure you give Raincoat a bite too.”

Shortly after, Raincoat returned with a brand-new baby bottle. Bunz filled the bottle with milk and gave it to Raincoat to feed Poofy. Bunz could hardly hold back his snickering as



he waited for the tiger cub to chomp down on Raincoat the same way it had to him. But instead of biting Raincoat’s paw, Poofy went straight for the bottle and started suckling. “Hehe, he is *such* a cute little kitty.” Raincoat squealed in delight as the cub drank.

“Just wait till he finishes the milk. Then you’ll see what a vicious carnivore he is.”

“Don’t be mean, Bunzy! Poofy is not a vicious carnivore. He’s just a little kitty that needs our help.”

“It’s *carnivore*, you idiot. And you’ll see soon enough. He’s almost finished the bottle.”

Poofy quickly finished the bottleful of milk and then began playing with Raincoat, reaching up with his paws to swipe at the bottle.

“See, Bunzy, even after eating, he’s still a nice kitty. You can play too.”

Bunz hesitated, but eventually began to play with the Poofy and the bottle. The cub playfully swiped at the bottle as Bunz held it.

“See, he’s a good kitty,”

Raincoat said happily as he reached to pet the tiger cub.

Chomp. This time it was Raincoat’s turn to get bitten.

“Wahaaaaa! Bunzy, he bit me.

Owwwch, Bad kitty!”

“Nope, I think he’s a good kitty after all.” Bunz snickered. “I’m going to bed. Don’t let the carnivore eat you.”

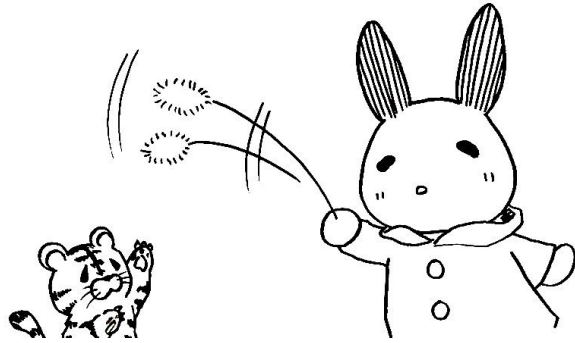
The next morning, Bunz woke up to the sound of Raincoat laughing again.

“For some reason, that sound is really annoying. What is he doing now?”



Bunz left his bedroom and came into the living room where Raincoat and Poofy were playing.

“Hey, Bunzy! You slept late today.”



“I got up at the same time I always do. You just got up early.”

“Well anyway, you’re just in time. I was about to put on Poofy’s collar.”

“What? You got him a collar! Is that the best thing you can do with your allowance? No matter what, he can’t stay here.”

“I know. But at least with this, we can go on walks while he’s here.”

“No, you can’t. The cops are looking for him, remember. If they see you with the tiger, you’re gonna get arrested.”

“Wahaaaah. I guess you’re right, but what are we going to do with him?”

Bunz explained his plan to secretly put Poofy back in the zoo on Sunday night after the weekend crowds go away.

Raincoat nodded repeatedly, but Bunz could tell he wasn’t actually paying much attention because he was messing around with the collar.

“What are you doing to that dumb collar anyway?” Bunz inquired.

“I put his name on it!” Raincoat answered proudly as he raised the collar up to show Bunz.

Raincoat had placed shiny rhinestone sticker letters across the collar that spelled POOFY along with a heart on each side.

Bunz couldn't hold back, "That is lame!"

"It's not lame!. Poofy really likes it." Raincoat retorted as he put the collar around the tiger's neck.

Poofy indeed seemed to like his collar and began to strut around the room. As he came over towards Bunz, Bunz ran his mouth again.

"Heh, if he likes such a lame collar, then he must be a pretty lame tiger."

CHOMP!

Almost as if he were able to understand the words, Poofy bit Bunz's paw again.

"Owwww! Maybe I deserved that one, but that collar is still lame."

"Haha, Poofy is punishing you for being mean. You should be glad he's not a big tiger."

"Yeah, we have to get him back to the zoo before he gets big, or else he's gonna eat us both."

"Speaking of eating, it's time to give him some more milk."

Raincoat went to the kitchen to prepare some milk. He returned shortly and offered the bottle to Poofy, but the tiger seemed disinterested.

"Why won't you drink, Poofy?," Raincoat asked. "Aren't you hungry?"



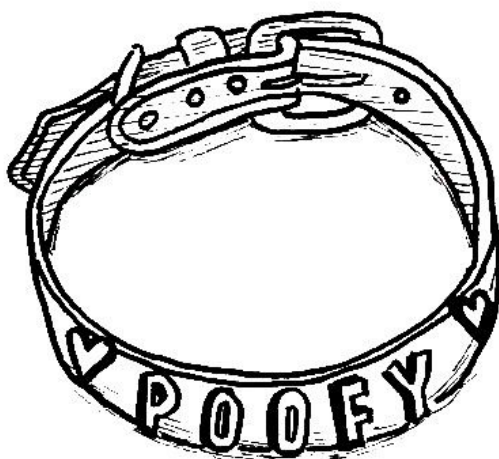
“Now that he’s had a taste of meat, he probably won’t drink milk anymore. We’re in real trouble now,” Bunz added jokingly.

For his part, Poofy gave a wistful look toward them, but still showed no interest in the bottle.

“You must miss your mommy,” Raincoat said thoughtfully. “Is that why you won’t drink?”

As if he could understand Raincoat’s words, Poofy purred softly. He then started to drink from the bottle.

Raincoat continued, “It’s okay, Poofy. We’ll get you back to your mom soon.”



Over the next day, Bunz worked to prepare the plan to get Poofy back into his mother’s enclosure at the zoo, while Raincoat primarily played with Poofy, who was becoming increasingly anxious. The news continued to run reports asking for information about the lost tiger cub. Bunz was nervous that they might be caught trying to sneak into the zoo after hours; his bright pink fur didn’t exactly lend itself to camouflage

“I think we need to go ninja for this,” he said to Raincoat.

“My pink fur and that dumb yellow raincoat of yours are going to both get us thrown in jail for catnapping.”

“Does that mean we have to wear black. I don’t really like black raincoats.”

“Heh, black can stand out too. The best color for sneaking around at night is navy!”

As he spoke, Bunz proudly pulled out a navy blue jumpsuit and mask.

“Bunzy, you look like a burger!. I’m not wearing that. It’s reticulated!”

“Do you mean burglar? I don’t wanna hear that from an idiot that wears a yellow poncho all the time. This is so we don’t end up in prison. And it’s *ridiculous*, not reticulated.”

“Wahaaah! I’m still gonna wear my raincoat.”

“I figured you might say that, so I got this...”

Bunz again proudly displayed a piece of clothing. This time it was a navy blue rain jacket identical in style to what Raincoat usually wore.

“That’s much better,” Raincoat stated approvingly. “Still not as cool as my yellow one, but I’ll wear it for Poofy’s sake.”

As he spoke, Raincoat slid on the new jacket over the yellow one he always wore.

“Somehow I thought you would do something dumb like that.” Bunz stated. “So I got that one a size bigger.”



With the wardrobe decided, Bunz's plan was nearly ready as daylight began to fade. Poofy could sense something was going on nervously circled around Raincoat's legs.

"Poofy, it's almost time to go back to your mom. I'm really gonna miss you here though."

The tiger cub purred again and rubbed against Raincoat like a housecat.

"Bunzy, I think he's saying he'll miss us too."

"Well, whatever. I just hope we don't get caught by police or eaten by some carnivore while we're in the zoo."

"What do you have against carnivals? They're supposed to be fun."

"Just be quiet, Raincoat. You're making us all dumber. It's time to go."



Bunz and Raincoat departed their home once it had become completely dark. Raincoat carried Poofy in his little brown backpack, and Poofy seemed to enjoy the ride. Bunz parked

his car a couple blocks away from the zoo entrance and pulled out a map of the zoo he found online.

“Ok, the tiger enclosure is near the back of the zoo, so we have to get past the monkeys and the elephants before we get there. Both of those--”

“Yay, Elephants!” Raincoat interrupted. “Did we bring peanuts to give them?”

“No! This is a secret nighttime mission. We have to get in and out as quickly as possible. We’re not seeing the zoo. As I was saying, both the monkeys and the elephants will be loud if we wake them up, so we have to be really quiet when we go by there. Got it?”

“Got it, Bunzy! Poofy and I will be super quiet.”

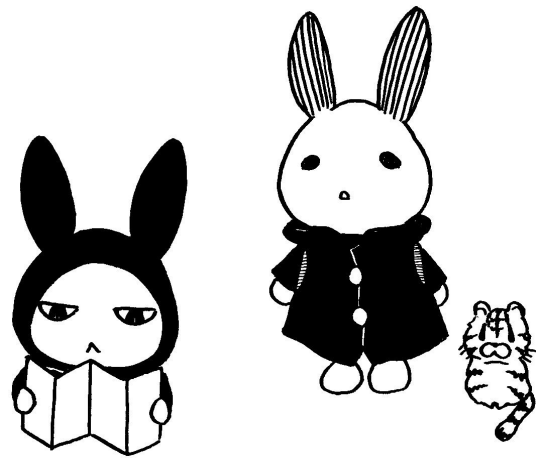
“You better be...”

They all left the car and headed towards the zoo’s main gate silently. They approached the gate, making sure to stay in the shadows so that the security cameras wouldn’t spot them. Within a couple minutes, they were past the gate and into the zoo itself.

“All right, we’re almost to the primates,” Bunz whispered.

“The nocturnal ones will be awake and will probably make noise, so we need to move quickly before a zookeeper gets here.”

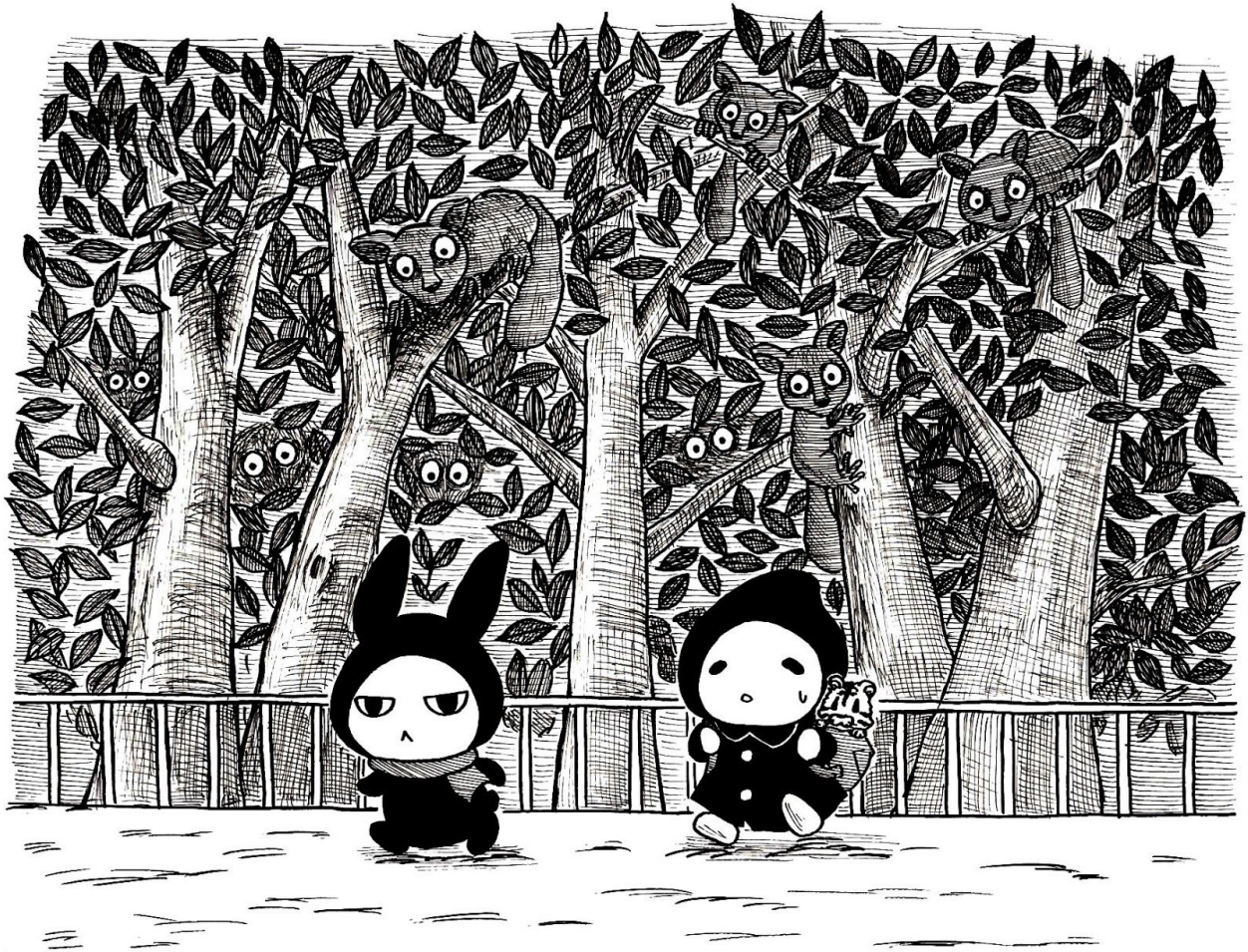
The two bunnies and a tiger soon came up on the primate enclosure. The structure was large with African trees and



shrubs and playground-like apparatuses surrounded by netting to keep them inside. It wasn't long before they started to see sets of eyes glinting back at them through the dim light.

“Wahaaa! What are those?” Raincoat asked frantically.

“Probably bushbabies and aye-eyes. They have creepy big eyes.”



Bunz and Raincoat walked slowly past the primate enclosure, the eyes tracking them as they went. Just when they were almost completely past, one of the animals cried out.

“O boi. Why did he have to do that now?” Bunz lamented. Then came the sound of footsteps as a security guard came running toward the primate enclosure.

“Hurry, let’s get out of here!”

They were able to successfully scurry away out of sight and hid behind a bench before the guard could catch a glimpse of them. The guard stood outside the primate enclosure looking puzzled.

“Did you guys see something?” he asked, not expecting an answer.

After a couple minutes of halfheartedly waving his flashlight around, the guard walked back the way he came and out of sight.

“That was a close one, Bunzy. Those silly monkeys nearly got us caught.”

“Yeah, I’ve never been a fan of them. Let’s move on.”

The elephant enclosure was only few steps away. Unlike the nocturnal primates, all of the elephants were lying on the ground fast asleep

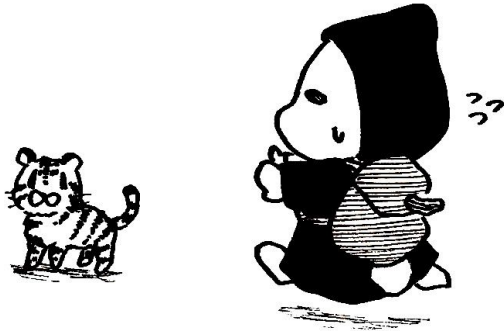
“Are those guys all right, Bunzy? They look kinda dead.”

“Yeah, I think they’re okay. But even if they aren’t, it’s not our problem. We just need to-- hey, what is that dumb cat doing?”

As Bunz was speaking he saw Poofy drop out of Raincoat’s backpack and wander toward the elephant enclosure and try to climb in.

Raincoat hopped as fast as he could and picked Poofy up just before he dropped over the ledge into the elephant enclosure.

“Bad Poofy!” Raincoat scolded him. “We’re almost back to your Mom. If you fall in there, we might not be able to get you out.”



After placing Poofy back in his backpack, Raincoat hopped back over to Bunz. Now it was his turn to get scolded:

“Make sure you keep him in there. We did not come this far to lose that cat before getting him back to his mom.”

“Wahaaah! He just slipped out while I wasn’t looking.”

“Of course you weren’t looking. He’s on your back!. We’re almost there. Let’s go.”

They walked for a couple of minute before they came to a large enclosure. Even in the dark, they could still make out the sign: *White Bengal Tigers*.

“This must be the place, Bunzy.”

“Yeah, I think so. But I don’t know where his mom is.”

Once again, Poofy started to squirm his way out of Raincoat’s bag and onto the ground.

“Hey Poofy, do you wanna show us where your mom is?” Raincoat asked quietly.

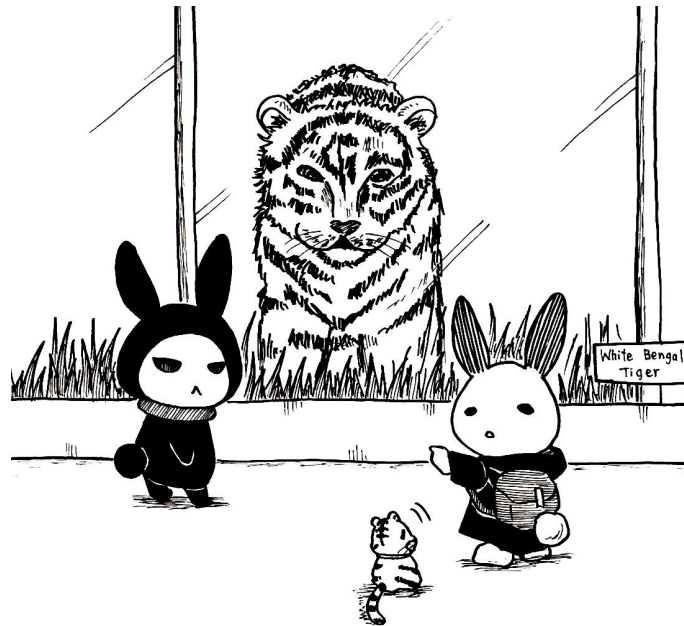
Poofy made something resembling a nod and walked to the plexiglass wall surrounding the enclosure. There he stopped and starting crying out, sounding very similar to a regular baby kitten.

In the darkness of the enclosure, they saw something move. Within seconds, an adult white tiger was standing near the edge of the enclosure, staring nervously out at them.

“Is that your Mom, Poofy? She’s like a jumbo marshmallow!” Poofy purred at Raincoat’s words, but Bunz had more practical matters on his mind.

“Ok, we found his mom. But how do we get him back in there? The wall is too high to climb over.”

Poofy, however, seemed to have an idea. He darted off to a bushy area just in front of the wall and then meowed to get Bunz and Raincoat to come over.



When they reached the area, they saw a small hole in the wall, just large enough for something Poofy’s size to get through and out of sight of the zookeepers.

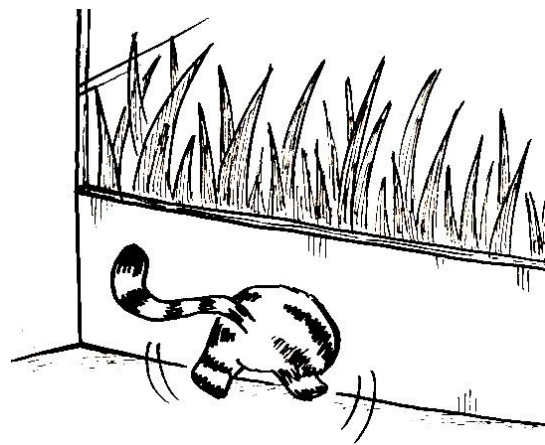
“Is this how you got out in the first place?” Bunz asked incredulously. “You weren’t kidnapped at all. You just escaped.”

“Well, I guess this is it,” said Raincoat already fighting back tears. “We’ll definitely come see you, so don’t forget us.” Once again, Poofy nodded and turned towards the wall. He tried to squeeze through the hole, but soon became stuck.

Even with just the little bit he'd grown over the past couple days, the hole was getting too small for him to fit through. "I think we need to help him, Bunzy. Let's give him a push." The two rabbits hopped over to where the tiger's rear end was sticking through the hole.

"Alright, on three." Bunz ordered. "One, two, three!"

With that, they pushed and Poofy clawed the ground in front of himself and squeezed through the hole. He turned and



gave a thanking look before scrambling off to find his mother. By the time Bunz and Raincoat made it back to the front of the enclosure, he was already standing with his mother, pawing at her face and motioning as if telling the story of his escapade.

To show her appreciation, the mother tiger turned towards the two rabbits and gave a loud, but calming roar.

"Bunzy, I think she's saying 'Thank you' in tiger."

"I know, Raincoat, but I'm not sure it's a good thing to make so much noise in--"

Off in the distance came the sound of human voices

"What's going on out there? The tiger's roaring. Go check it out."

"O boi!" Bunz said alarmedly. "Time to go!"

"Wahaaaah, bye Poofy! We'll come see you soon."

Although they had to dart into the shadows to avoid zookeepers a couple times, Bunz and Raincoat's disguises served them well, and they made it out of the zoo without incident.

"They were so concerned with getting to the tiger pen, that they didn't even see us Bunny Ninjas," Bunz stated haughtily when they go back to the car.

Clearly a bit depressed, Raincoat responded simply, "Let's go home, Bunzy. I'm tired."

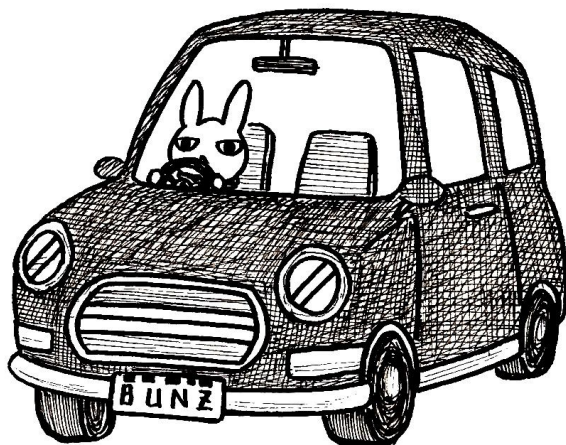
The next morning, after his customary carrot-centered breakfast, Bunz got in his car and headed to work to start the new week. Just before he arrived, the news came on the radio...

Zoo officials were pleasantly surprised late last night to find that the missing white tiger cub has been returned to its mother. Officials commented that they still have no idea

how the tiger got out of its enclosure, but say that the animal is healthy and returned with a collar around his neck bearing the name "Poofy"...

Bunz turned the radio off as he pulled into his parking spot.

"Heh, those zookeepers got outsmarted by a cat. Lame!"



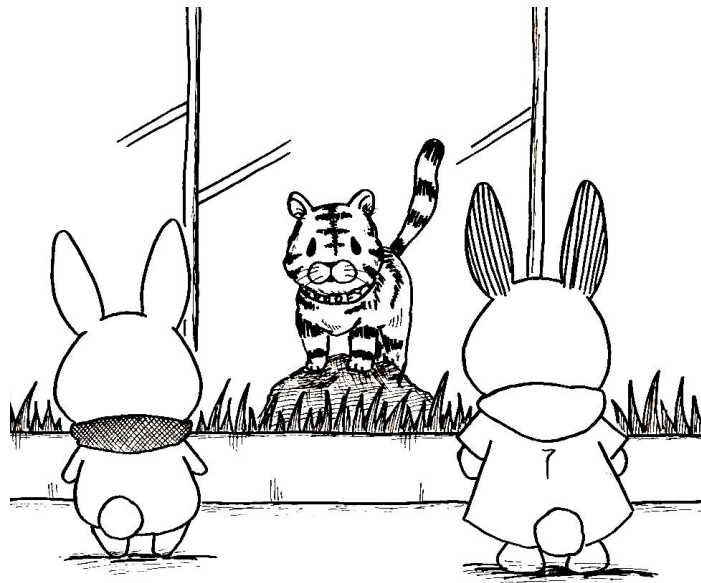
That weekend, after a week of nonstop nagging, Bunz and Raincoat went to the zoo, this time as guests. They took their

time looking at all the other animals because they knew big crowds would be around the popular tigers, but after the crowds had thinned, the two bunnies went to see the tiger enclosure. As they came up, they saw the young tiger that they had taken care of. Despite that only a few days had passed, he looked significantly larger and certainly could no longer fit through the hole that allowed him to go on his adventure.

Bunz and Raincoat came up to the enclosure, wondering if their friend would remember them. Poofy, who had been given the name officially, looked out at them from a rock outcropping and gave a small roar, or perhaps a large meow. Either way, Raincoat was impressed.

“Poofy is so cool! Isn’t he, Bunzy?”

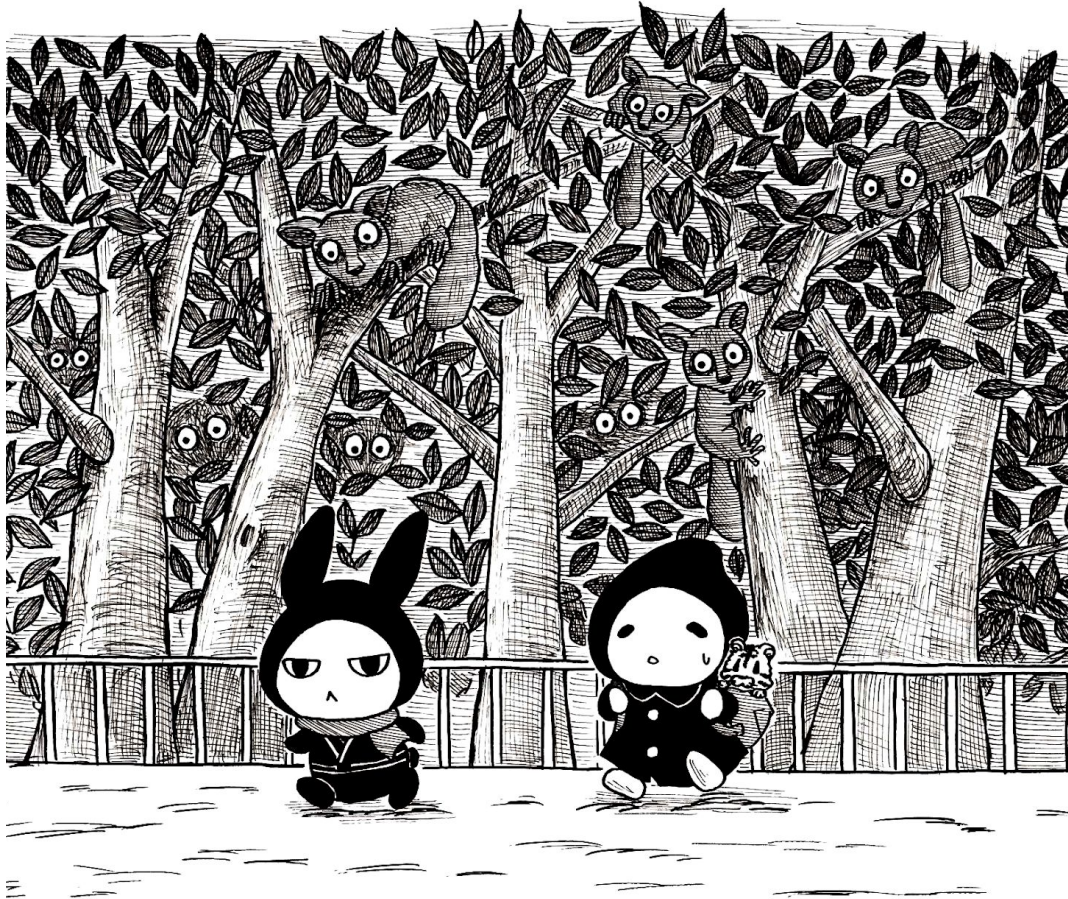
“Yeah, he’s not bad...for a carnivore.”



- THE END -

Funky Bunny Tails: Poofy the Tiger

Written by David C. Scott
Illustrated by Maya Murata



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